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## Challenging Urban Exclusion? Theory and Practice

*Abstract:* Urban exclusion has become one of the most studied subjects in the areas of both urban studies and exclusion studies. The problem is interpreted as a range of serious issues affecting the very social order of contemporary cities. Urban exclusion hinders the equal and sustainable development of society, hence leading policymakers to try and employ different programmes focused on tackling urban exclusion. Although their overall aims are similar, their specific means and measures differ significantly. However, it is important to ask whether the phenomenon of urban exclusion is sufficiently specific enough to allow for the development of particular effective approaches to challenge it.

*Keywords:* urban affairs, urban exclusion, social inclusion, social integration, tackling urban exclusion.

Social differentiation is an immanent attribute of every society. Once differences begin to be perceived as inequalities, and start to be interpreted as social problems, the serious question arises: how can we name and describe these differences? Problems of this kind appear to become even more difficult when attempts are made to characterise the social inequalities visible in the city, an allegory of modern society. From the beginnings of urban societies, cities have been places in which social differences have appeared most striking. Poverty and wealth, hopelessness and power, social disrespect and esteem—all found gathered cheek by jowl in a relatively small space. At first, such differences may simply have contributed to the tapestry of urban colour, but since the beginning of modern urbanisation, they have developed into serious social problems. The contrasts have become too vivid, have brought with them too many serious consequences, and have exasperated decent citizens, public opinion, and city governments. Urban exclusion has become, as a result, one of the most intensely studied subjects in both urban studies and exclusion studies (Madanipour, Cars and Allen 1998; Musterd and Ostendorf 1998; White 1995; Healy 1997; Andersen and van Kempen 2001).

All of the processes described here as part of urban exclusion are seen by urban researchers and practitioners as serious problems. As such, they are found to affect not only the quality of life, but also the very social order, of contemporary cities, and are often perceived as serious threats to society as a whole. Urban exclusion hinders the equal, sustainable development of society. Thus governments at different levels (from local municipal governments to supranational ones, such as the European Commission) attempt to use specific programmes to tackle urban exclusion. Their overall aims are similar, but the specific means and measures they employ differ significantly.

The aim of this article is to review the variety of contemporary sociological concepts of urban exclusion, as well as the means that have been proposed to tackle this phenomenon. It also aims to answer the question of whether urban exclusion is specific enough to allow the development of particular effective approaches for challenging it. The paper is organized in the following way: Initially, as necessary background, concepts of poverty, marginalisation, and deprivation will be described. The second part contains a description of the concept of social exclusion. The third part focuses on urban exclusion, and its significance in contemporary societies. In the fourth section, social inclusion and integration are described as opposites of exclusion. The last part of the paper discusses types of approaches and programs that have been implemented against urban exclusion.

### **Concepts of Poverty, Marginalisation, and Deprivation**

In the early days of modernisation, a simple concept of poverty was sufficient enough to describe the phenomena of social inequality. Poverty could be defined as the inability to achieve an adequate standard of living. Such a popular definition is entirely relative:<sup>1</sup> the adequateness of living standards can vary across time and space. As Peter Townsend specifies,

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged, or approved, in the societies to which they belong (Townsend 1979: 31).

Yet the relativeness of poverty is only one side of the coin. The other is its correlation with social valuation. Those members of society who cannot reach a socially approved quality of life are thus deprived of their dignity and affected by shame (Sen 1983).

However, the poverty discourse has serious limitations. First of all, it is often perceived as one-dimensional, reduced only to material (most often income) deprivation (Iceland 2007). Secondly, poverty is a static concept—it describes a certain state of the individual, rather than the process of becoming poor (Paugam 1996). Thirdly, using Pete Alcock's words, "poverty is inevitably a political concept, and thus inherently is a contested one" (Alcock 1997: 3).

For these reasons, another concept—multidimensional, more dynamic, and less value-burdened—was needed. There are at least a few such terms that have been used to describe the phenomena of social differentiation and inequalities. These include deprivation, marginalisation, and exclusion.

The concept of deprivation, especially relative deprivation, relates to the psychological feelings of individuals who perceive that they possess far fewer socially

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<sup>1</sup> There have been attempts to describe poverty as an absolute phenomenon by specifying a fixed amount of money, goods or services below which individuals are said to experience poverty (e.g. malnutrition). Such an approach is characteristic of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme; see UN (1995).

desirable goods than do other similar people (Masters and Smith 1987). In other words, “deprivation occurs in relation to desired points of reference (...), rather than in relation to how little one has” (Morrison 1971: 675). Such a psychological approach might be of use when applied to the sources of social unrest, but is relatively inadequate in analysing structural inequalities.

The next alternative term, marginalisation, originates as a sociological concept from the idea of the “marginal man,” presented by Robert Park (1928). Since that time, however, its range of significance has spread from ethnic immigrant groups—as in Park’s original idea—to other minorities (religious, cultural, political, and economic). Marginalisation provides a more multidimensional perspective than the concept of poverty (Dickie-Clark 1966; Germani 1980), and it seems to describe the structural situation of marginalised individuals and groups well. On the other hand, one has to remember that to some point it is a mixture of both psychological and social constraints: The metaphor of “living on the margins of society” means not only that one experiences social and structural barriers, but above all emotional ones. Perhaps this is why marginalisation, as both a theoretical and an empirical concept, has not played a crucial role in the study of inequalities.

### **Social Exclusion: The Scope of the Concept**

Certainly the concept of exclusion has had a great career in both social research and social policy. Various researchers have sought for its origins in the works of different authors. Ruth Levitas (2000) sees it in Durkheimian thought. Asmund Born and Per H. Jensen (2002) search for its source in the works of Robert K. Merton. However, it is Hilary Silver (2007) who presents the broadest list of sociologists who may have influenced the development of the idea of social exclusion: Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Norbert Elias, and Erwin Goffman. Although these early inspirations were clearly sociological (and closely connected with issues of social integration), the concept of social exclusion became more universal with time, and came to be located at the point of contact between sociology and social policy. Its popularity began in France, where it has been used since the 1970s to describe social disintegration. “‘*Les exclus*’ were those who fell through the net of social protection, and its later extension to include those affected by long-term unemployment” (Hills 2004: 52). In other words, the term “social exclusion” was initially used to describe the social situation of the poor.

The term had much the same meaning for the European Commission (EC), which introduced it in its documents at the turn of the 1990s.<sup>2</sup> As Ruth Lister (2005) argues, it was the EC that popularized this concept among the member states. One of the most striking examples of seizing on the exclusion discourse is in the United Kingdom, where after the Labour Party came to power in the 1990s, a Social Exclusion Unit was brought into existence.

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<sup>2</sup> For mechanisms of the adoption of the social exclusion idea in the policies of EU, see Atkinson (2000).

There are several important definitions of social exclusion, but as Silver notes, “by all accounts, defining exclusion is not an easy task. (...) Clearly, the expression is so evocative, ambiguous, multidimensional and elastic that it can be defined in many different ways” (Silver 1994: 535–536).

Nevertheless, “there is a common component to most definitions of social exclusion that refers to a situation of multiple disadvantages in terms of labour market marginalisation, poverty, and social isolation. These different dimensions of social exclusion are seen as mutually reinforcing, as constituting a vicious circle that leads to a progressive deterioration in people’s labour market situation” (Gallie and Paugam 2004: 35).

There are two types of definitions that describe social exclusions. The first is relatively narrow, with a meaning very close to that of poverty: A lack of material resources, which, again using Townsend’s words, “excludes from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities” (Townsend 1979: 31). That is,

[A] shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown (Social Exclusion Unit 2001).

Social exclusion is a process that deprives individuals and families, groups and neighbourhoods of the resources required for participation in the social, economic and political activity of society as a whole. This process is primarily a consequence of poverty and low income (Pierson 2002: 7).

Yet there are also broader meanings of exclusion, which additionally cover other social groups outside of mainstream society. In this broader meaning, it is not only poverty, but also other features including race, nationality, ethnicity, age, sex, sexuality and disability, that can lead to social exclusion. Every feature that may cause an individual or a group to not be properly included in the social structure can give rise to poverty.

Social exclusion is a rupturing of the social bond. It is a process of declining participation, access, and solidarity. At the societal level, it reflects inadequate social cohesion or integration. At the individual level, it refers to the incapacity to participate in normatively expected social activities and to build meaningful social relations (Silver 2007).

There is also no agreement on how to distinguish between the dimensions of social exclusion. In many cases, scholars give different answers to the question, “exclusion from what?” The authors of the study *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain* (Gordon et al 2000) claim that there are four such dimensions:

- exclusion from adequate income or resources,
- labour market exclusion,
- service exclusion,
- exclusion from social relations.

An earlier proposal by Marshal Wolfe (1995: 82) is more expansive, consisting of six dimensions:

- exclusion from earning a livelihood,
- exclusion from social services, welfare, and security networks,
- exclusion from consumer culture,

- political choice exclusion,
- exclusion from the bases of popular organisation and solidarity,
- exclusion from obtaining an understanding of what is happening to society and to oneself.

It is worth noticing, however, that in both cases (and in any other case) these dimensions are not separable—they interact with each other. For example, exclusion from the labour market usually entails exclusion from both adequate income and from some social relations (especially in the case of long-term unemployment). Therefore, such a distinction should be treated rather as an analytical tool which can help in describing some of the aspects of exclusion, rather than characteristics of truly existing differences.

The broad range of definitions and different ideas concerning dimensions of social exclusion suggests that we can talk about different meanings, or even different paradigms, of social exclusion. This intuition finds confirmation in Silver's (1994) work. The author distinguishes between three such paradigms: the solidarity, specialisation, and monopoly paradigms.<sup>3</sup> These are based on different theoretical perspectives, political ideologies, and national discourses.

Solidarity paradigm	Specialisation paradigm	Monopoly paradigm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• typical of France</li> <li>• derives inspiration from republicanism</li> <li>• describes exclusion in terms of the breaking of ties between an individual and society</li> <li>• exclusion is a threat to society, and it should therefore be reversed by integrating the excluded into the structures of society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• typical of the United Kingdom</li> <li>• derives inspiration from liberalism</li> <li>• exclusion is a natural consequence of the differentiation processes</li> <li>• highly individualistic view—it is the freedom of individuals that gives an impulse to social integration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• typical of continental Europe</li> <li>• derives inspiration from the thought of the political left</li> <li>• exclusion is a consequence of social structure: class, status, and political power. The excluded are those who do not possess material resources, social respect, or power.</li> <li>• social inclusion can be achieved by the development of citizenship.</li> </ul>

Based on: Silver (1994).

To some extent, this diversity of meanings and paradigms reduces the explanatory power of the concept of social exclusion. Yet this is a normal situation in the social sciences, which is in Kuhn's words, "multiparadigmatic." The concept of social exclusion thus still remains one of the most expressive ideas used to describe social inequalities.

Social exclusion is not only a theoretical term, but also one with an empirical meaning. This is important for both researchers and practitioners whose task is to tackle social exclusion. In the search for an empirical description of social exclusion, researchers and practitioners have proposed different sets of indicators intended to portray this phenomenon. Such indicators may be treated as signs of exclusion. For practical reasons, they mostly consist of statistical data—in some cases measured at the

<sup>3</sup> Another proposal for the systematisation of the exclusion concept is found in the work of Ruth Levitas, who describes three different discourses within the discussion of exclusion in the United Kingdom: RED (the redistributionist discourse), MUD (the moral underclass discourse), and SID (a social integrationist discourse). See Levitas (1998).

individual or household level, while in others at the level of deprived areas or neighbourhoods (Hills 2004). There are a few sets of exclusion indicators that are commonly used. Among the most widely known are the so-called Laeken indicators,<sup>4</sup> prepared in 2001 by the Laeken European Council. These consist of ten primary indicators that aim to describe the most important signposts of social exclusion, and eight secondary indicators, which are supplementary (Council of the European Union 2004).

Although Laeken indicators are used by member states in National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion, some countries have their own exclusion indicators. For example, the Department for Work and Pensions in the United Kingdom has prepared a list of indicators, divided into four parts by the “type” of excluded person: children and young people, people of working age, people in later life, and communities (Department for Work and Pensions 2007). The most striking difference between this kind of exclusion indicator and the Laeken indicators is the differentiation between different social categories, in accordance with the assumption that there are actually different signs of exclusion, depending on the stage of the life cycle.

However when using social exclusion indicators—even those which are highly extended and precise—it is worth remembering John Pierson’s words:

...it is important not to confuse ‘causation’ with ‘correlation’. Indicators do not identify the ‘causes’ of social exclusion and still less do not provide the basis for blaming individuals or families. They are merely quantifiable signposts—ways of estimating the degree of exclusion within a particular area (Pierson 2002: 8).

### Urban Exclusion and its Variety

Any description of urban exclusion should begin with a note that contemporary cities face processes of economic restructuring, which in many cases are caused by, or at least strengthened by, globalisation. The structure of urban labour has undergone changes (smaller demand for industrial workers, greater demand for service workers, a growing number of low-skilled jobs, growing unemployment), which has brought about social polarisation and the development of social inequalities (Musterd and Ostendorf 1998: 2). There are people who benefit from these changes (Sassen 1991), but there are some who are because of it deprived of their life chances, and do not fully participate in the social, political, and cultural systems.

Urban exclusion is perhaps even more multidimensional than exclusion itself. In the broader urban exclusion discourse, several (often interconnected) more frequently analysed issues can be distinguished. The first is urban poverty (Donnison et al. 1991; Mingione 1996; Gotham 2003), which can be generally described as the state of being deprived of the most important needs, as well as in having a lack of resources, which results in a lowering of quality of life for those who live in metropolitan areas. The causes of urban poverty differ: While at first the poor were those whose incomes were insufficient, for some time a new term—new urban poverty—has been developing (Wilson 1998), which describes “the shift from (...) being poor but working to being

<sup>4</sup> These are in fact social inclusion indicators. For the background on forming these indicators, see Marlier et al (2007); Marlier, Atkinson, and Nolan (2004).

unemployed en masse" (Phillimore and Goodson 2006: 1718). In this context, other expressions are often used: urban underclass, new urban poor (Wilson 1987; Kasarda 1989; Naroska, 1988). It is worth noticing that, especially in countries which face these problems, urban poverty is very often perceived in the context of racial and ethnic minorities (Harding 2007).

Poverty can be one of the causes of urban marginalisation (Wacquant 1999), pushing away those city residents who do not have sufficient resources (economic, cultural, social, political, etc.) from participating in mainstream city life. This "pushing away" is not only used in the metaphorical sense, but is also used quite literally. Urban poverty and urban marginalisation have a tendency to concentrate, hence leading to urban segregation (Massey and Denton 1993; Musterd and Ostendorf 1998). These terms put different accents on different dimensions, but generally describe situations where there is a spatial concentration of the socially excluded, who either choose or are forced to live in certain places, called deprived neighbourhoods (Andersen 2003; Atkinson and Kintrea 2001), enclaves of poverty (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Grotowska-Leder and Krzyszkowski 2002), impoverished neighbourhoods (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska 1998), or districts with special development needs (Becker 2003). Regardless of the differences, these terms describe places and the situation of their inhabitants, typified by the accumulation of bad conditions: economic, infrastructural, ecological, and social. People living in such places are unemployed, or earn sufficiently little to benefit from social welfare. The residences they live in are dilapidated and underdeveloped. They may lack basic facilities (such as hot water, heating, and sewage systems), as well as living materials such as furniture. Usually such places are overcrowded. Their environs may also be underdeveloped—there may be a lack of basic (or nondefective) infrastructure, with roads and pavements in bad condition; the area might be lacking in public spaces that could serve for recreation, such as children's playgrounds, parks, and sports grounds; and the commercial infrastructure may be poorly developed. The residents' sense of security may be relatively low. Often one can observe the disintegration of social bonds among people living in enclaves of poverty. The notion of spatial segregation is very often strengthened by its racial and ethnic character. In such cases, the term *ghetto* (Jargowsky 1997; Wilson 1989) is used to describe the concentration of people of one race or ethnic identity into one particular neighbourhood or district. David Ward describes a *ghetto* as a "residential district that is almost exclusively the preserve of one ethnic or cultural group" (Ward 1982: 258). It is worth noticing that, since the 1970s, urban researchers have begun to observe the development of another phenomenon—the *hyperghetto*, where more than 40% of inhabitants live below the poverty line (Wacquant 1994).

The impression of the differentiation of urban society has led to the proposition of the thesis of urban polarisation (Hamnett 1994), which refers to "a growth in both the bottom end and the top end of the socio-economic distribution" (Musterd and Ostendorf 1998: 2)—that is, a growing number of extremely poor and extremely rich residents, and their spatial concentration in enclaves of poverty or ghettos, and in citadels (Marcuse 1997), respectively. The latter are gated communities (Blakely and Snyder 1997), with access restricted exclusively to those who meet high material and



status standards. These processes lead to observations, which result in metaphors of divided cities (Fainstein, Gordon and Harloe 1992), and dual cities (Marcuse 1989; Mollenkopf and Castells 1991).

### **Social Inclusion**

For many researchers and practitioners, social exclusion remains a normative concept. This means that it not only serves as an analytical tool for describing different dimensions of social inequalities, but it also comprises an implicit assumption that social exclusion is a problem that society needs to deal with. As Alan Murie and Sako Musterd observe, “Social exclusion is an encompassing normative concept to address a lack of participation in (...) societies; it is mainly regarded as something that should be reduced” (Murie and Musterd 2004: 1441).

If social exclusion is an undesirable state, there should however be an opposite and desirable situation. In this case, two terms describing non-exclusion can be indicated. The first and most obvious is social inclusion. It is clear that the scope of social inclusion is somehow determined by the scope of the exclusion, a fact that is especially visible in Pierson’s statement:

Tackling social exclusion and promoting its opposite, social inclusion, means developing approaches to practice that address each of these domains: maximising options for income, strengthening social networks, tackling the quality of life in neighbourhoods and making services more accessible (Pierson 2002: 9).

Martin Kronauer (2002), who draws attention back to the relational character of exclusion and inclusion, distinguishes between two forms of inclusion, namely interdependence and participation. The first refers to inclusion in the social division of labour and in social networks. The latter means increasing participation: material, political, and cultural.

Although social inclusion seems to be a useful term for describing processes of tackling social exclusion, one has to remember that, although it is thought to be the opposite situation to social exclusion, it is in fact a concurrent phenomenon. Exclusion and inclusion are parts of the same process—social polarisation. “Increased social inequality and social division results in the social inclusion of one part of society and the social exclusion of another part” (Musterd and Ostendorf 1992: 2). Only in utopian open societies would inclusion be absolute—in all other real, existing cases, inclusion accompanies (if not causes) exclusion.

The other term that is used as an opposite to social exclusion is integration. In the words of Alan Murie and Sako Musterd:

social exclusion is clearly related to the concept of integration. For many, social exclusion is regarded as a negative fact or a negative process; integration as the opposite, an objective to achieve greater social inclusion. So, exclusion and integration can be regarded as two sides of the same coin and can thus be put in a similar conceptual framework (Murie and Musterd 2004: 1442).

The sociological background of the integration concept seems to be more significant than that of inclusion. The idea of integration has been used by Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, Talcott Parsons, and Niclas Luhmann (Strobl 2007).

In terms of tackling exclusion, integration means incorporation into the structure of society. However this “insertion” may have a double meaning. The first, which is the classic meaning derived from Durkheim, means much the same as assimilation. The excluded should become part of the dominant culture. This meaning of integration has often been used in ethnicity, race and identity studies. The second, a more contemporary denotation of integration, is less oppressive in that it more or less explicitly implies accommodation of both the excluded and the dominant society (Silver 1994).

Of course, the terms inclusion and integration, despite some differences in meaning, are closely connected. When describing social exclusion in Ireland, Patrick Commins (1993) suggested that social inclusion means incorporation into four systems of society:

- the democratic and legal system: insertion in this social subsystem encourages civic integration
- the labour market: insertion in this social subsystem encourages economic integration
- the welfare system: insertion in this social subsystem encourages social integration
- the family and community system: insertion in this social subsystem encourages interpersonal integration

Within such an approach, social inclusion actually means social integration, and as such is inseparable from it.

### **Tackling Urban Exclusion**

Tools to combat the social exclusion of inhabitants of certain districts and neighbourhoods may differ depending on the mode of action they accept. We can distinguish between two such modes: area-based initiatives (or policies) and community development programmes. Although this list is incomplete, these two ways seem to be the most significant.

Area-based initiatives (ABIs) are focused on tackling local manifestations of social exclusion by reducing its causes: mostly economic, infrastructural, and ecological. When they concentrate on the revitalisation of space and environment, they are called place-based ABIs. When their measures are focused on occupational activation of the socially excluded, they are referred to as people-based ABIs (Carpenter 2006: 2147). There are, however, some programmes that mix these two approaches in order to increase efficacy.

Another, more detailed division of ABIs, is also based on the policy target:

- business development ABIs (focused on job creation),
- human resource development ABIs (focused on skills development and improving job access),
- physical business infrastructure ABIs (focused on job creation),
- neighbourhood development ABIs (focused on the development of housing and environment conditions),

- social economy ABIs (focused on development of community services and jobs) (European Commission 2000).

Community development programmes are focussed less on making both neighbourhoods and their residents more competitive, but rather concentrate on the issue of participation in the life of the community. They focus on paying attention to the collective, shared aspects of social problems that affect people's lives, and on helping members of communities band together through the use of programmes aimed at solving these problems. The basic means for achieving this goal is the strengthening of neighbourly bonds, and the mobilisation of the local potential for action (Blackman 1995; Hautekeur 2003).

In the European context, the most widely known example of a community development programme is the URBAN Community Initiative,<sup>5</sup> implemented by the European Commission in the years 1994–1999 and URBAN II,<sup>6</sup> implemented in the years 2000–2006. Carpenter (2006: 2147) claims that before this time the EU was not strongly engaged in urban development, but since then it has become an important part of its regional policy. The aim of both initiatives was to promote the design and implementation of more specific urban development programmes in European cities with special development needs or with special social problems.

Apart from this, there are many programs aimed at tackling urban exclusion implemented at the level of the state. In France, there is the “Contrats de Ville” within the French Urban Regeneration Programme (Delegation interministérielle à la ville 2000). In Flanders, a Social Impulse Fund was introduced in 1996.<sup>7</sup> In the United Kingdom, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit<sup>8</sup> has been operating since 2001 to implement a few programmes: the New Deal for Communities, Neighbourhood Management, and Neighbourhood Wardens. The common feature of these programmes is that they attempt to mix the macro and micro approaches—at the macro (or state) level they are focused on ensuring material resources and legal frameworks. At the lower levels (region, city and neighbourhood), the implementation of the programme is usually differentiated—tailored to fit the local environment and local problems. The actors are also local—municipal authorities, estate companies, NGOs, etc. Apart from that, such programs attempt to combine both area-based and community approaches. One example of such a method is the Socially Integrated City programme (*Soziale Stadt*), introduced in Germany at the end of the 1990s.<sup>9</sup> The basic principle of this programme is to combine the traditional approach to revitalization with the idea of social activation. An intended consequence of the project has been the integration of residents from so-called districts with special developmental needs (*Stadtteilen mit besonderem Erneuerungsbedarf*) into society, first by reviving the social bonds within the districts,

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<sup>5</sup> Urban Community Initiative, [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/archive/urban2/urban/initiative/src/frame1.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/urban2/urban/initiative/src/frame1.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Urban II Community Initiative, [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/archive/urban2/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/urban2/index_en.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Poverty Neighbourhoods, Economic Integration and Urban Policy, [http://www.kuleuven.be/StADT/kern\\_e.html](http://www.kuleuven.be/StADT/kern_e.html).

<sup>8</sup> Communities and neighbourhoods, <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk>.

<sup>9</sup> *Soziale Stadt*, <http://www.sozialestadt.de/>.

and then the bonds between the districts and the rest of society. Multilevel actions (at the federal, state, city, district and neighbourhood level) have been employed by the programme to improve the economic situation of the residents, their quality of life, their social engagement and participation and the social bonds among them, as well as the infrastructure and the economy of the districts.

Another group of programmes intended to tackle urban exclusion are those that are designed and executed independently, usually by municipal authorities. Their scope is local and their resources are limited, but these restrictions are reduced by their main advantage—they are developed as an answer to specific local problems, and they often result from a long-established practice of social work. An interesting example of gaining experience in urban development actions is in Glasgow, where the first initiatives aimed at tackling urban exclusion begun in the 1970s (European Commission 2000).

### Conclusions

The presented review of the concept of social exclusion with a focus on urban exclusion shows that this notion seems to be one of the key ideas of contemporary social science. The reason for this appears complex. First of all, exclusion as such is one of the most important, and above all, universal phenomena observed in various societies and in different times. Second, its consequences are of extraordinary significance, not only to those who are excluded, but also to the entire society. Therefore social exclusion is undoubtedly an important social challenge. Tackling social exclusion—no matter whether we describe our aim as inclusion or integration—seems to be at the same time both an act of defiance and a threat, as there are no universal, efficacious measures that could assist in overcoming this social problem.

Urban exclusion concentrates on, or perhaps even represents, many social problems of the contemporary world. Exclusion in the urban context has many aspects: one can be excluded economically, politically, and culturally, but also spatially. Income, class, race, ethnicity, age—many of the features that are factors in social differentiation—are concentrated in urban ghettos. Such ghettos may have no walls, yet they are often impassable. At the same time, urban exclusion is a phenomenon that is not, and cannot be, imperceptible, as it has grown into the “urban tissue,” and even attempts (like gentrification) to overcome the problem cannot move it out of sight.

This visibility may be one of reasons why there are constant attempts to develop specific programmes dedicated to dissolving the problem of urban exclusion. Public administration at different levels, and also third sector organizations, continue to try to find means and measures to tackle this problem. Nevertheless, it seems that in the long term there are no universal methods that would give a guarantee that the phenomenon of urban exclusion could be resolved, or at least visibly reduced. The example of Glasgow’s forty-year fight against this problem shows that the approaches of the development programmes, as well as the aims and measures they employ to resolve social problems, have changed over time, while the overall objective—

tackling urban exclusion—has remained the same. Unfortunately, urban exclusion seems not to have been significantly reduced over that time. This kind of experience of the immutability of urban exclusion gives the impression that this social problem is unsolvable. Yet attempts to tackle urban exclusion are ongoing, and will continue to be, as long as the problem continues to be recognized as important. Therefore, urban inclusion or integration should be described as long processes, rather than a single action or set of actions.

The inefficiency of many of the programs aimed at combating the social exclusion of the inhabitants of cities might be explained by the distinction between the macro and micro approaches towards urban deprivation made by Juliet Carpenter (2006). The micro approach describes programmes tailored to fit specific problems in specific disadvantaged urban areas. Although they seem to be better suited to this task, the reality is not so bright (as described earlier). The example of a multidimensional and complex program like *Soziale Stadt*, that combines a typical area-based approach (dedicated to the economic, infrastructural and ecological causes of urban exclusion) with a community-development tactic (dedicated to social cohesion and the participation of the urban excluded) demonstrates that typical urban inclusion programs are often incapable of changing the situation—especially the economic standing of people affected by urban exclusion.

The macro approaches are based on the assumption that urban exclusion is a result of a more general phenomenon: the presence of economic problems (namely poverty) within society. The basic way to combat urban exclusion is to improve the redistribution of goods. In other words, there is no specific way to tackle urban exclusion beyond combating exclusion and poverty itself. This kind of thinking is characteristic of classic welfare states. Yet such a perspective might suggest that urban exclusion is a phenomenon that is less complex, or rather less peculiar, and is simply a variety of social exclusion. Apart from that, to accept this standpoint would also mean to call into question the legitimacy of many of the urban inclusion programmes.

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